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TENNESSEE FARMERS REPORT THEIR 2001 PLANTING INTENTIONS

Producers plan to grow more cotton this year but corn, soybean, and tobacco acreage are all expected to decrease from the previous year, according to a recent survey by the Tennessee Agricultural Statistics Service. Farmers across the Volunteer State were asked about their crop acreage plans for 2001 on a March 1 Planting Intentions Survey. Total **cotton** acreage is forecast at 600,000, up 30,000 acres from the previous two years and the highest level in the State since 1995. Producers have been keeping an eye on commodity prices and many believe cotton gives them the best chance financially this year. **Soybean** acreage is expected to be 1.05 million acres, 11 percent below the previous year and the fewest acres since 1995. High input costs and disappointing soybean prices are the leading causes for the expected acreage cut. The high cost of nitrogen fertilizer relative to a year ago is one of the factors leading to the expected decline in the State's **corn** acreage. As of the first of March, 640,000 acres of corn are expected to be planted throughout the State, 10,000 acres less than a year ago. Normal crop rotation and a small increase in **sorghum** acreage are also reasons for the expected decline. **Burley** tobacco growers plan to harvest 34,000 acres in 2001, the lowest acreage since 1927. Debra Kenerson, State Statistician for Tennessee, explained that the survey results are a snapshot as of March 1, and are subject to change. "This survey is our first look at what farmers intend to grow during the upcoming crop year. However, economic changes and weather conditions both play major roles in the final outcome."

Soybean Acreage Expected to Decline in 2001

Tennessee soybean acreage is expected to decline 130,000 acres in 2001 to a total of 1.05 million. Some of the acreage loss is expected to shift to cotton, but many farmers reported that they may not plant some of their marginal land due to high input costs. Another reason for the expected decrease could be the fear of another late summer drought. Double-cropped soybean yields have been down significantly the last two years and with high costs of production and low price expectations; some producers may cut back on their acreage following wheat. Conversely, if farmers are unable to plant corn and cotton due to adverse weather in the spring, some of this acreage could ultimately fall back into soybeans due to its much wider planting window.

Corn Down Slightly, Sorghum Increases

Corn acreage for 2001 is forecast at 640,000, down 10,000 acres from last year. Normal crop rotation and high nitrogen fertilizer costs are the main factors given for the acreage decrease. In addition, some growers have indicated they will plant more sorghum this year. Total sorghum acreage for 2001 is forecast at 30,000, up 5,000 acres from last year and the highest level in the State since 1994. Field preparation has been slowed recently due to cool, wet conditions, but planting of both crops should begin within the next few weeks.

Largest Cotton Acreage in Six Years

The State's cotton acreage is expected to increase by 30,000 acres in 2001 to a total of 600,000, the highest level since 1995. Favorable demand relative to other crops and positive results of the Boll Weevil Eradication Program are some of the driving forces behind the increase.

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Program Changes Dictating Decline in Tobacco Acreage

Burley tobacco is expected to decline to 34,000 acres in 2001, the smallest acreage in 74 years. The basic quota will be up from 2000 for burley farms, but the effective quota is down. Expected high lease rates, such as experienced last year, also contributed to the expected acreage decline. Dark tobacco acreage is expected to drop as a direct result of the cut in the 2001 acreage allotment. Type 22, Eastern Dark-Fired acreage is forecast at 6,100, down 1,500 acres from last year and the lowest level in the State since 1988. Type 23, Western Dark-Fired is forecast at 500 acres, the lowest acreage since 1990. Type 35, Dark Air-Cured is forecasted at 620 acres, down 70 acres from 2000.

Dry Fall Conditions Lead to Wheat Acreage Decrease

Dry conditions during September and October of 2000 delayed winter wheat seedings and then wet weather in November and December ultimately halted additional plantings. Consequently, weather was a major factor in the acreage decrease in 2001. Total acreage, at 520,000, is 30,000 acres below the previous year. The crop is currently progressing well and growers have been busy top-dressing between rain showers.

Record Hay Acreage Expected Again

Hay producers intend to harvest 2.04 million acres this year, virtually unchanged from last year. If realized, this will be a new State record. Livestock producers reported that cattle are in good condition coming out of winter. Most areas of the State experienced an unusually cold December but conditions returned to normal for the remainder of the winter months. Most areas reported adequate hay supplies this winter due to fairly normal weather and record-breaking hay production of last year.

Planting Intentions: Tennessee and United States, March 1, 2001, with Comparisons				
Crop	1999	2000	Intended 2001 ¹	2001/2000
Tennessee	1,000 Acres			Percent
Corn	630	650	640	98
Sorghum	20	25	30	120
Winter wheat	500	550	520	95
Soybeans	1,250	1,180	1,050	89
Cotton, all	570	570	600	105
Tobacco, all ²	63.17	51.92	41.22	79
E. Dark-fired (22)	7.00	7.60	6.10	80
W. Dark-fired (23)	0.57	0.63	0.50	79
Burley (31)	55.00	43.00	34.00	79
One-sucker (35)	0.60	0.69	0.62	90
Hay ²	1,880	2,035	2,040	100
United States				
Corn	77,386	79,545	76,693	96
Sorghum	9,288	9,195	9,368	102
Winter wheat	43,331	43,348	41,336	95
Soybeans	73,730	74,496	76,657	103
Cotton, all	14,873.5	15,536.5	15,614.0	100
Tobacco, all ²	647.16	485.73	457.67	94
E. Dark-fired (22)	10.75	11.70	9.30	79
W. Dark-fired (23)	4.07	4.43	3.50	79
Burley (31)	303.60	198.40	182.50	92
One-sucker (35)	3.45	3.79	3.42	90
Hay ²	63,220	59,854	63,771	107

¹ Intended planting for 2001. ² Acres harvested.